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SONNETS.



SONNETS

AND

FUGITIVE PIECES,

BY

CHARLES TENNYSON, TRIN. COLL.

The Sonnet's humble plot of ground.

Wordsworth.



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TO MY SISTER MARY.

SISTER! accept these lays: as yet I ween
No lay but mine has open'd with thy name;
I would I were a bard of mightier fame,
Then would this tribute of more price have been,
And thou hadst worn a costlier pledge, in sign
Of my deep love: My name is all unknown,
And daring not to venture forth alone
It fondly seeks companionship of thine—
And thou dost love me more than to believe
Thy brother's lay can furnish shame to thee:
Critics! be your dispraise from harshness free
And scornful gibe, nor give me cause to grieve,
For, if ye sternly say I cannot sing,
My Sister's name is on a shamed thing!

SONNETS.

I.

THE ÆOLIAN HARP.

OH! take that airy harp from out the gale,
It's sorrows call from such a distant bourne,
Now that the wind has woo'd it to it's tale
Of by-gone bliss, that never can return:

Hark! with what dreamy sadness it is swelling!
How sweet it falls, unwinding from the breeze!
Disorder'd music, deep and tear-compelling,
Like siren voices pealing o'er the seas;
Nay—take it not, for now my tears are stealing,
But when it brake upon my mirthful hour,
And spake to joy of sorrow past the healing,
I shrank beneath the soft-subduing power:
Nay, take it not—replace it by my bower—
The soul can thrill with no diviner feeling!

II.

When lovers' lips from kissing disunite
With sound as soft as mellow fruitage breaking,
They loath to quit what was so sweet in taking,
So fraught with breathless magical delight:
The scent of flowers is long before it fade,
Long dwells upon the gale the vesper-tone,
Far floats the wake the lightest skiff has made,
The closest kiss when once imprest is gone;
What marvel then that youth so fondly kisses,
That deep and long he prints the ardent seal!
What marvel then with sorrow he dismisses
This thrilling pledge of trustful hearts and leal!
While eyes look into eyes and none represses
With meddling words, the passion they reveal!

III.

On—on—in firm progression—sure and slow—
More scorning hindrance as ye meet it more;
Surmounting what ye cannot thorough go,
And forcing what ye fail in climbing o'er;
Soon shall ye gaze upon the bliss attain'd,
And worth attainment fourfold as severe;
The glorious meed for zealous souls ordain'd
Shall shine upon ye palpable and clear:
Then when the starry coronal of Fame
Shall gird your brows all perdurably bright,
When ye have seen the solitary flame
That burns upon the solitary height,
Ye will not then your daily cares misname
As toil:—well spent, for Rapture to requite!

IV.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

O! honey-throated mourner of the grove!
That in the glooming woodland art so proud
Of answering thy sweet mates in soft or loud,
Thou dost not own a note we do not love!
The moon is o'er thee—laying out the lawn
In mighty shadows—and the twilight skies,
Imbued with their unutterable dyes,
A thousand hues from Summer sources drawn;
While wandering for the dreams such seasons give
With lonely steps thro' this transcendant scene,
The Poet weeps for joys that fled yestreen
And staid not here to bless this purple eve,
Too lately fled, and brought him here to grieve
In passionate regret for what hath been.

V.

TO THE LARK.

And am I up with thee, light-hearted minion!
Who never dost thine early flight forego,
Catching for aye upon thy gamesome pinion
What was to fill some lily's cup below,
The matin dew-fall? what is half so thrilling
As thy glad voice i' th' argent prime of light?
Whether, in grassy nest, when thou art billing,
Or thus aloft and mocking human sight?
Peace dwells with thee for ever, not the peace
Of cool reflection, but redundant glee,
And with such vocal token of wild ease
Thou dost reveal thy proud immunity
From mortal care, that thou perforce must please:
Fair fall thy rapid song, sweet bird, and thee!

VI.

The ocean at the bidding of the moon
For ever changes with his restless tide ;
Flung shoreward now, to be regather'd soon
With kingly pauses of reluctant pride
And semblance of return :—Anon from home
He issues forth anew, high ridg'd and free —
The gentlest murmur of his seething foam
Like armies whispering where great echoes be !
O leave me here upon this beach to rove,
Mute listener to that sound so grand and lone—
A glorious sound, deep drawn and strongly thrown,
And reaching those on mountain heights above,
To British ears, (as who shall scorn to own ?)
A tutelar fond voice, a saviour-tone of Love !

VII.

Hence with your jeerings, petulant and low,
My love of home no circumstance can shake,
Too ductile for the change of place to break,
And far too passionate for most to know—
I and yon pollard-oak have grown together,
How on yon slope the shifting sunsets lie
None knew so well as I, and tending hither
Flows the strong current of my sympathy ;
From this same flower-bed, dear to memory,
I learnt how marigolds do bloom and fade
And from the grove that skirts this garden glade
I had my earliest thoughts of love and spring :
Ye wot not how the heart of man is made,
I learn but now what change the world can bring!

VIII.

How can the sweetness of a gentle mind
Pall on thy Spirit? say, it is not so!
Her eyes are mournful and her sorrows flow
For that she fears her hands have fail'd to bind
The tie of mutual wishes round thy heart:
Thy faith was given—thy promise made a part
Of the pure ritual that confirm'd her thine:
Oh—do not thou annul that rite divine,
Nor bid such symbol swell the tinsel-mart
Of empty shews, unmeaning types and vain:
But teach thy wife to nurse her hopes again
In love returning never to depart,
For nothing festers like a broken vow
That wrecks another's peace and blights another's
brow!

IX.

Vexation waits on passion's changeful glow,
But th' intellect may rove a thousand ways
And yet be calm while fluctuating so :
The dew-drop shakes not to its shifting rays,
And transits of soft light—be bold to choose
This never-satiate freedom of delight
Before the fiery bowl and red carouse,
And task for joy thy soul's majestic might :
So for the sensual will be rarer need,
So will thy mind a giant force assume,
Strong as the centre of the deep Maelstrom
When flung into the calm of sightless speed :
So wilt thou scorn on lowlier aims to feed,
And go in glory to a sage's Tomb !

X.

TO —————

I have a circlet of thy sunny hair
And 'tis, I wot, a blessing to mine eyes—
For gentle happy thoughts are sworn to rise
Whene'er I view it softly-folded there,
Lifeless and listless, like a treasure's key,
Unwitting of the dreams it doth compel
Of gems and gold pil'd high in secret cell,
Too royal for a vulgar gaze to see !
If they were stol'n the key might never tell,
If thou wert dead, what should thy ringlet say?
It shews the same, betide thee ill or well,
Smiling on earth or shrouded in decay !
And were cold winter with thee, Isabel,
I might be smiling here on blossoms of thy May !

XI.

It is a Summer's gloaming, faint and sweet,
A gloaming brighten'd by an infant moon
Fraught with the fairest light of middle June ;
The garden path rings hard beneath my feet,
And hark, O hear I not the gentle dews
Fretting the silent forest in his sleep ?
Or does the stir of housing insects creep
Thus faintly on mine ear ? day's many hues
Wan'd with the paling light and are no more,
And none but drowsy pinions beat the air—
The bat is circling softly by my door,
And silent as the snow-flake leaves his lair,
In the dank twilight flitting here and there,
Wheeling the self-same circuit o'er and o'er.

XII.

O be thou keen to guess when Flattery's near !
His face is not the shadow of his heart ;
The Court is all for lucre, like the mart,
And fraught with perils that a king should fear—
Trust not the flatterer's hollow sympathy
For should'st thou fathom that dishonest sound,
The line would rise with noisome clays hung round
And not the fruitful loam of love for thee :
O ill-starr'd royalty ! Love's balmy sighs
Where Truth breathes on us from her sweetest
 shrine—
The access to all pure delights and ties,—
Say are they less the peasant's lot than thine ?
Beyond the Shepherd's bliss thou can'st not rise
And many snares to steal ev'n that combine.

XIII.

No trace is left upon the vulgar mind
By shapes which form upon the poet's thought
In instant symmetry : all eyes are blind
Save his, for ends of lowlier vision wrought ;
Think'st thou, if Nature wore to every gaze
Her noble beauty and commanding power
Could harsh and ugly doubt withstand the blaze
Or front her Sinai Presence for an hour ?
The seal of Truth is Beauty—When the eye
Sees not the token, can the mission move ?
The brow is veil'd that should attach the tie
And lend the magic to the voice of Love :
What wonder then that doubt is ever nigh
Urging such spirits on to mock and to deny ?

XIV.

AUTUMN.

The softest shadows mantle o'er his form—
And the curv'd sickle in his grasp appears
Glooming and brightening—and a wreath of ears
Circles his sallow brow, with th' angry storm
Gusts down at intervals:—about him stray
The volant sweets o' the trailing mignonette,
And odours vague that haunt the year's decay :
The crush of leaves is heard beneath his feet,
Mix'd, as he onward goes, with softer sound,
As tho' his heel were sinking into snows :
Eftsoons a sadder Landscape opens round
With here and there a latter-flow'ring rose,
Child of the summer hours, but blooming here,
Far down the vista of the fading year.

XV.

The foot of Time so soundless never pass'd
As when sweet fancy wove her magic thralls—
Go, mourner, to the Muses, haste thee, haste,
And bring thy gifts where Peter's shadow falls
To heal thee in his passing: call for aid
Of joy, that quenches being and it's gall—
Sad! that the consciousness of Life must fade
Before the bliss it yields be felt at all:
We cannot sit, inertly calm'd, to hear
The silence broken by the step of life;
We must have music while we languish here,
Loud music, to annul our spirit's strife,
To make the soul with pleasant fancies rife,
And soothe the stranger from another sphere!

XVI.

This, and the following, are supposed to be written by one, on whom the death of an excellent woman has forced the conviction of a future state.

O'erladen with sad musings, till the tear
Sprang to the pressure, I survey'd thy tomb
All drest in flowers, as tho' above thy bier
The breath yet hovering fed the gentle bloom :
I said, Maria ! tho' I deem'd too long
That souls would fade like music on the air—
Hast thou not brought me 'confirmation strong,'
That they shall yet be beautiful elsewhere ?
For thine was so immaculate and rare,
That but the thought of such deep purity
Link'd with that other thought, I could not bear ;
Range then bright soul, and take thy place on high,
I do confess thou wert so good and fair
That thou, if none beside, wert never born to die !

XVII.

The bliss of heaven, Maria, shall be thine,
Joy link'd to joy by amaranthine bond,
And a fair harp of many strings divine
Shall meet thy touch with unimagined sound!
Divinity shall dwell within thine eye,
Fed by the presence of a loftier soul :
Thy brow shall beam with fairer dignity,
No more thy cheek shall blench with care's control,
Or yield its hues to changes of the heart,
That beats with plenitude of life and woe,
Taking all dyes that sorrow can impart,
Or ever-shifting circumstance bestow—
The prey of present pangs or after-smart,
For ever feeling pain or missing bliss below.

XVIII.

We cannot keep' delight—we cannot tell
One tale of steady bliss, unwarp'd, uncrost,
The timid guest anticipates farewell,
And will not stay to hear it from his host !
I saw a child upon a Summer's day,
A child upon the margin of a pond,
Catch at the boughs that came within his way,
From a fair fruit-tree on the bank beyond ;
The gale that sway'd them from him aye arose,
And seldom sank into such kindly calm
As gave his hand upon the bunch to close,
Which then but left it's fragrance on his palm ;
For the wind woke anew from its repose,
And bore the fruit away, but wafted all its balm.

XIX.

EVENING.

See'st thou how clear and sharp the shadows are
Amongst the cattle on yon ridgy field,
So softly glooming amid light so fair :—
Yon mighty trees no blast may dare to wield ;
The things that own most motion and most sound
Are tranc'd and silent in a golden swoond :
Where is the wind ? not in yon glassy sky—
Not in the trees—what deep tranquillity
Has hushed his voice ? methinks so calm should fall
The Eve before the great millennial morn,
Before the first of those high days is born
Whose placid tenor shall be peace to all :
Sink deeply in my thought, surpassing scene !
And be thy memory clear, for I would live therein !

XX.

Vessel* of Britain, proudly wert thou going,
Thy strong foundations seated in the sea,
Yet moving like the wind—the hearts were glowing,
The steps were light, the melody was free,
That usher'd in that midnight jollity;
Sad was the stroke, and mournful was the doom,
That quench'd those happy hearts so suddenly:
And sad it was to see their kindred come
In quest o' the dearest brow, with hushing breath:
O that those blessed days should ne'er return
When Christ was ready at the gates of death
To bid them back whom widow'd souls would mourn!
To melt the seal upon the infant's urn—
'Why sorrowest thou, thy son but slumbereth!'

* A short time back the steam-boats, Ayr and Comet, struck together, and the latter instantly went down. Many of the passengers were engaged in dancing at the time. A number of the bodies were afterwards found, and laid out for recognition.

XXI.

ON STARTLING SOME PIGEONS.

A hundred wings are dropt as soft as one
Now ye are lighted—lovely to my sight
The fearful circle of your gentle flight,
Rapid and mute, and drawing homeward soon :
And then the sober chiding of your tone
As there ye sit from your own roofs arraigning
My trespass on your haunts, so boldly done,
Sounds like a solemn and a just complaining !
O happy, happy race ! for tho' there clings
A feeble fear about your timid clan,
Yet are ye blest ! with not a thought that brings
Disquietude, while proud and sorrowing man,
An Eagle, weary of his mighty wings,
With anxious inquest fills his little span.

XXII.

See'st thou her blushes, that like shadows sweet
Pass upward from the silence of the heart,
Avowing it's fond dream by token meet—
Their crimson traits dissolve, but not depart
The hopes they usher to the lover's breast;
The signature has melted from the bond,
But he doth trust it, asking nought beyond
What promise all so briefly hath imprest:
Deep in her virgin heart has sunk the glow—
But thou hast cull'd its promise, and to thee
If lapse of faith or dark misdoubt should be,
'Twill steal into the blenching face of wo,
Chide back thy pulse to its remitted flow,
And tinge despondent thought and misery.

XXIII.

I trust thee from my soul, O Mary dear,
But, oftentimes when delight has fullest power,
Hope treads too lightly for herself to hear,
And doubt is ever by until the hour :
I trust thee, Mary, but till thou art mine
Up from thy foot unto thy golden hair,
O let me still misgive thee and repine,
Uncommon doubts spring up with blessings rare !
Thine eyes of purest love give surest sign,
Drooping with fondness, and thy blushes tell
A flitting tale of steadiest faith and zeal,
Yet I will doubt—to make success divine !
A tide of summer dreams with gentlest swell
Will bear upon me then, and I shall love most well !

XXIV.

ON A PICTURE OF THE FATES.

Ye dull and loathly sisterhood forlorn !
Why did the fabling soul of ancient song
Build up a falsehood of such dreary scorn,
As that to you our being should belong ?
Likening a life that feels so much of heaven,
And so divinely sensible of joy,
To a frail thread at your dull mandate riven,
For hands so pale to weave and to destroy ?
Soul-deadening lore ! that had long since its birth
When the strange perjury of ancient creed
Jarr'd in full discord—now our hearts are freed !
And solemn reason dictates to the earth,
Since that most perfect Law shone forth to bless,
That hath no peer in moral loveliness !

XXV.

MARTIAL ARDOUR IN AGE.

And if ye marvel that mine eye doth glow
Now every pulse of fervid youth is lost,
Ye never heard the kingly trumpets blow—
Nor felt the fieldward stirring of a host,
Nor how the bayonet assures the hand
That it can never fail—while Death doth stand
Amid the thunders of the reckless drum,
And the loud scorn of fifes, asham'd and dumb—
Nor, when the noble revel dies away,
How proud they lie upon the stained mould,
A presence too majestic to gainsay,
Of lordly martial bearing, mute and cold,
Which honour knows o' th' instant—such as lay
On Morat late, or Marathon of old!

XXVI.

ON SEEING A CHILD BLUSH ON HIS FIRST VIEW
OF A CORPSE.

'Tis good our earliest sympathies to trace,
And I would muse upon a little thing—
What brought the blush into that infant's face
When first confronted with the rueful king?
He boldly came, what made his courage less?
A signal for the heart to beat less free
Are all imperial presences, and he
Was aw'd by Death's consummate kingliness!—
And by the high and peerless front he bore—
No thought of dying armies crost the lad,
He fear'd the stranger, tho' he knew no more:
Surmising and surpris'd, but most, afraid,
As Crusoe wandering on the desert shore
Saw but an alien footmark and was sad!

XXVIII

TO A REDBREAST.

The ox is all as happy in his stall,
As when he lowed i' the Summer's yellow eve
Browsing the king-cup slopes, but no reprieve
Is left for thee, save thy sweet madrigal,
Poor Robin! and severer days will fall:—
Bethink thee well of all yon frosted sward,
The orchard path so desolate and hard,
And meadow-runnels with no voice at all!
Then feed with me, poor warbler, household bird,
And glad me with thy song, so sadly timed,
And be on thankful ears thy lay conferr'd;
So, till his latest rhyme the bard hath rhymed,
Thy voice shall with a pleasant thrill be heard,
And with a Poet's fear when twigs are lim'd!

XXVIII.

TO ——— ON ACCIDENTALLY RUBBING THE DUST
FROM A BUTTERFLY'S WING.

The light-set lustre of this insect's mail
Hath bloom'd my gentlest touch—This first of May
Has seen me sweep the shallow tints away
From half his pinion, drooping now and pale !
Look hither, coy and timid Isabel !
Fair Lady, look into my eyes, and say,
Why thou dost aye refuse thy heart to stay
On mine, that is so fond and loves so well ?
Is beauty trusted to the morning dews,
And to the butterfly's mischanceful wing,
To the dissolving cloud in rainbow hues,
To the frail tenure of an early spring,
In blossoms, and in dyes ? and must I lose
Claim to such trust, all Nature's underling ?

XXIX.

The strongest hearts grow fearful at the name
Of him who gathers up the coil of things—
Surceasing breath, and life, that flies yet clings,
May be a terror, all unknown to shame :
That worms should revel in the shrines of pride,
That death should damp the brows of mighty men,
Is truth avow'd and dreadful—When, oh! when
Shall I stand helpless in the foaming tide ?
But stay, my heart, with proud assurance call
Those hopes into thy Landscape, fain to rise,
Even then, when man was powerless in the thrall
Of hateful rites, and mythologic ties,
But priceless now, aye, more than any gold,
Not vague, but very sooth; not fearful, but most
bold !

XXX.

O God, impart thy blessing to my cries,
Tho' I trust deeply, yet I daily err ;
The waters of my heart are oft astir,
An Angel's there ! and yet I cannot rise !
I wish that Christ were here among us still,
Proffering his bosom to his servant's brow,
But oh ! that holy voice comes o'er us now
Like twilight echoes from a distant hill :
No mountain-sermons, and no ruthful gaze !
No voice sweet-ton'd, and blessing all the time :
No cheerly credence gather'd from his face !
No path thro' hamlets in the eve or prime !
No gentle prayers for all our faded race !
And those whose hearts are half-unstrung with
crime.

XXXI.

O! it is sweet to weave ærial ties
With fair and fond creations of our own,
To keep the spirit buoyant on the rise
Of that unebbing joyance which alone
Engrosses life,—The consciousness of power
To sluice pure waters from the fount of song,
And far in lordly eminence to tower
Above the world on pinions swift and strong;
Confronting greatness in her every form,
By the deep sea, and where the thunders lower
To pour from out their skirts th' Atlantic storm;
To keep unfading impress of each hour
That Nature's beauty hallows, and to know
Which is the purest tone her voice doth yield below!

XXXII.

TO———ON HIS DEPARTURE FOR GREECE.

Young Tourist to the land whose hope has past,
Fain would I seek with thee those shores sublime
That hear no promise from the lips of Time
Of hours so bright as those he overcast !
There is that Athens ! still in ruin fair
Tho' long gone by her intellectual reign—
Arcadia waits in patient beauty there,
To hear her lingering shepherd's voice again !
Tradition's varlets ply a clumsy art
Here in the West—no faithful light they lend,
But keep the dues of fame so ill apart,
That the great claims of mount and valley blend—
Misname the passes with incurious ease,
And mix the records of the plashing seas !

XXXIII.

TO —————

Thought travels past thee with intenser glow,
And nobler visions burn upon thine eye
Than other souls e'er knew of, or can know :
Massing delicious thought and fancies high
From hour to hour, thy spirit teems with joy,
Nor seldom with unrest : for when the mind
O'er many themes keeps survey unconfined,
Death will be one,—'tis surely sad to die !
Plac'd at the limit of all mortal being
The mute unquestionable shadow stands,
Whose simple mandate binds the giant's hands
Helpless, and seals the keenest eyes from seeing ;
We call him Death—he telleth not his name —
We see his power, but know not whence he came.

XXXIV.

The bells awake the sabbath's choral prime,
By breezes soften'd to a harp-like tone ;
Lowly and sweetly from the distance thrown
They greet the ear with jubilee and chime !
Follow the sound, and it will lead thee on
Into an English church, the Home of prayer,
For who shall say she is not lovelier there
Than in all other fanes beneath the sun ?
There, if thou doubtest, may it not impart
Fresh hope to learn that others' hope is sure ?
There, duly as the merchant to the mart,
Come aged men, whom daily death makes fewer :
There all the spirit of a Christian heart
Is bodied forth in gentle rites and pure !

XXXV.

TO A LADY PLAYING HER OWN MUSIC ON
THE HARP.

Thou sittest at thy lyre, O Lady sweet,
Teaching it all thine own delicious soul,
Thy voice the while swells richly o'er the whole,
And greets mine ear, for angel's ear more meet !
Unhappy me ! not for another's bliss—
But that thou art the blessing ! soon to me,
Tho' now thy voice doth sound so dear and free,
Its spell shall vanish in another's kiss !
Unhappy me ! my wounds shall ever smart :
Alas for fruitless love ! alas for them
Who pluck the flowers and press them to their heart,
Tho' other hands must claim the vital stem
And all its future bloom !—I know thou art
Powerless to save, tho' hating to condemn.

XXXVI.

Joy came from heaven, for men were mad with pain,
And sought a mansion on this earth below;
He could not settle on the wrinkled brow,
Close-gather'd to repel him, and again
Upon the cheek he sought repose in vain,
He found that pillow all too chill and cold,
Where sorrow's streams might float him from his
 hold,
Caught sleeping in their channel: th' eye would fain
Receive the stranger on its slippery sphere,
Where life had purer effluence than elsewhere,
But where no barrier might forbid the tear
To sweep it when it listed; so not there
He staid, nor could the lips his couch prepare,
Shifting untenably from smile to sneer.

XXXVII.

SILKWORMS AND SPIDERS.

The worm long fosters his transforming sleep,
But claims th' unalienable life again,
Which tho' it be but one, yet seemeth twain,
The trance between is all so deadly-deep:
The careful spider spreads before his lair
The web, ygather'd near his filmy heart
Withouten throes or any vital smart,
And of his entrails makes his foes a snare:
In both a mighty mystery resides,
A truth, on whose developement they thrive;
One for the cravings of his life provides,
One weaves himself another way to live;
To search the secret is beyond our lore,
And man must rest, till God doth furnish more!

XXXVIII.

ON MY BIRTH-DAY.

The summer-tide has brought my natal hour—
Comes it to usher days of bliss or bane?
To set a seal on grief? or to impower
With tenfold strength the tyranny of pain?
Oh! might we summon back by charm of art
Those days of bloodless food, and placid sleep
Which crept exhaling from the mother's heart,
So holy—dreamless—innocent and deep:
We leave the womb to slumber on the breast,
We leave the breast to climb upon the knee—
Soon beckon'd off by dolor and unrest,
Till our first sympathies are hard to see,
Which passion's heavy overgrowths invest,
Scarce disentwin'd by keen philosophy!

XXXIX.

GREECE.

Written on hearing the rumour of Prince Leopold's expedition.

Now are we free to roam thy flowery dales,
Fair Greece! and where each ancient fountain flows;
Now are we free to cull the lily' and rose,
That bloom so sweetly down thy noble vales:
And ye are free, Arcadian nightingales,
To lavish on the air your tuneful woes,
That sweetly rise and with all sweetness close
Where high Lycæus breathes of rural tales
And Pan, and jealous Lucretil surpast:
The fanes upon each ruin-cover'd wold,
They too are free to crumble undefac'd,
For Britain's future poets to behold,
That they may hold that sum of memories fast
Which is their dowry from the days of old!

XL.

On from the spot that saw it's first essay
The earthquake travell'd—mark ye how he strove!
While ruin, aye attendant on his way,
Sped swiftly o'er the cleaving realms above:
Slowly the seasons do transform the grove,
All other change is wrought with soft delay
But this, which drives the course of streams astray
Once and for evermore: When to remove
Earth from her deep foundations God doth will,
The work is done with noises thunder-loud
And lightning-speed: Such ministers fulfil
The 'hests of Him, by whom the Heavens are bow'd
When he descendeth down on Zion hill,
While darkness is beneath him like a cloud!

XLI.

WAR.

The tide of things should flow less troubled, sure ;
To clear its current sages do impart
Their fruitful streams, and the wise Poet's heart
Pours in its crystal tribute, bright and pure !
But still doth War present a mighty lure
To many minds, a charm which lulls to rest
Compunctious thought, and mails th' ambitious
 breast
With triple-plaited iron to endure
The shock of all that softens and endears,
Untouch'd, unsoften'd, and without a sigh,
Or bodement of such temper : helms and spears
School to unpitying calm the warrior's eye ;
Carnage he means, when he cries ' Victory',*
And barren Battle hath his hopes and fears !

* Licence they mean, when they cry Liberty.—MILTON.

XLII.

His was a chamber in the topmost tower,
A small unsightly cell with grated bars;
And wearily went on each irksome hour
Of dim Captivity and moody cares!
Against such visitants he was not strong,
But sate with laden heart and brow of woe,
And every morn he heard the stir and song
Of birds in royal gardens far below,
Telling of bowers and dewy lawns unseen,
Drench'd with the silver steam that night had left—
Part blossom-white, part exquisitely green,
And ringing all with thrushes on the left,
And finches on the right, to greet the sheen
Of the May-dawn; while he was thus bereft!

XLIII.

ON THE DEATH OF SIR T. LAWRENCE.

No feeble glow of intellectual flame
Inform'd the heart of Lawrence; worthier due
Than he to after-life of praise and fame
Hath none; what hand so excellently knew
The shadow of our lineaments? in vain
The glance of beauty dar'd his cunning skill—
Touch'd into all its sympathies again,
Kindled anew with all its power to kill:
Age smil'd, portray'd in all its sober calm,
Unvext, of grandsire-aspect pale and meek,
A palsied frame, and past the power of harm;
And youth, with full and health-ensanguin'd cheek
Shew'd life-like on his chart,—and boyhood sleek
Still wore his dimpled chin and merry charm.

XLIV.

*Supposed to be written by any feeble-minded man, meditating
self-destruction.*

Sweet brother-soul! I may not tarry here,
The grave is made for me—if joy had been
But rarely visitant or dimly seen,
I would not thus have call'd the distance near,
Or summon'd for my peace this early bier :
But happiness long-while hath kept aloof,
An alien to my heart, which was not proof
Against the lacking of a thing so dear :
The hour is drawing nigh, when this wild heart
Shall be the thrall of worms, and know it not,
As calm as peace can be. No pulse or start
Of reviviscence, till the life hath got
Its flow again, which had but ebb'd in part :
But never more to feel the sinner's earthly lot !

XLV.

TO A. H. H.

When youth is passing from my hoary head,
And life's decline steals brightness from thine eye—
But *that* it cannot soon, nor quench the red
Upon thy cheek that hath so rich a dye—
Then of what crowns of fame may thou and I
Avow ourselves the gainers? with what balm
Of christian hope, devotionally calm,
Shall I be then anointed? will this sigh,
Born of distempered feeling, still come forth
As thus, unjoyous? or be left to die
Before the rapid and unpausing birth
Of joyous thoughts succeeding momentarily!
What would not such recoil of bliss be worth,
Replacing in our age this early loss of joy?

XLVI.

O Lake of sylvan shore, when gentle Spring
Slopes down upon thee from the mountain-side,
When birds begin to build and brood and sing,
Or in maturer season, when the pied
And fragrant turf is throng'd with blossoms rare—
In the frore sweetness of the breathing morn
When the loud pealing of the huntsman's horn
Doth sally forth upon the silent air
Of thy thick forestry, may I be there,
While the wood waits to see its phantom born
At clearing twilight in thy glassy breast ;
Or when cool eve is busy on thy shores
With trails of purple shadow from the west,
Or dusking in the wake of tardy oars.

XLVII.

TO —————

A lovely vision fading out of sight,
Pure waters fast a-draining, these may be
Apt semblance of a truth well known to thee,
Poor pallid maid ! thou can'st not reunite
Nor blend again the colours of thy heart,—
The secret nurture of a healthy mind
Will long preserve, perchance may half impart,
The cheek's pure glow, to sorrow ne'er assigned ;
But thine is cold and pale, as might beseem
A rose-bud planted in a vase of snow,
Which droops full soon, as it did surely know
Of the thin flakes collapsing round its stem ;
E'en thus thy cheek has lost its vital glow,
Because there is no source of kindly warmth below !

XLVIII.

Hung on the shower that fronts the golden west
The rainbow bursts like magic on mine eyes,
In hues of elden promise there imprest,
Frail in its date, eternal in its guise—
The Vision is so lovely, that I feel
My heart endued with beauty like its own,
And taking an indissoluble seal
From what is here a moment, and is gone ;
It lies so soft on the full-breasted storm,
New-born o' the middle air, and dewy-pure,
And trick'd in Nature's choicest garniture ;
What can be seen of lovelier dye or form ?
While all the groves assume a ghastly stain,
Caught from the leaden rack and shining rain.

XLIX.

ON A GENIUS OF LOWLY ESTATE.

Where may not hearts be found to Nature leal?
Born with no loftier hope or prouder aim
Then lowly lineage, like his own, could claim,
How did he guess that he was born to feel?
How was the fire first smitten from the steel?
When came that sweet enforcement of his will?
How did his soul, 'mid poverty and ill,
Find leisure to endow itself so well?
Methinks, one summer's eve, he first did hear
The rise and fall of music in his heart,
Wild notes, a-dropping downward without art
To a sweet close, that fell upon his ear
Unutterably soft, and yet most clear,
And seeming from his bosom's depth to start.

LINES.

And art thou gone unto the skies,
And is thine home that happy spot,
Where meet the saintly and the wise,
Where God is prais'd and tears are not?

I keep a record in my thought
Of all thy soft endearments here,
And often stealeth in unsought
Thy promise of a better sphere:

For whither can thy spirit wend?
If not to bliss, O! not to bale,—
And art thou nothing? Heaven forefend!
And truth disclaim the dreary tale!

When goodness fades from earth and ill,
From all the joys it shar'd and gave,
Sure,—sure, the links are lengthen'd still,
Tho' viewless upward from the grave.

The tie of faith is gently drawn
By memory of thy taintless soul ;
I see the day-spring and the dawn,
And hope has soar'd beyond control !

LINES.

'Tis sweet, when hours of toil are o'er,

To feel the slackening of repose,

When the faint lids can watch no more

And o'er the eyes of labor close ;

Gently as falls, late pois'd above,

The pinion of th' alighting dove.

'Tis being's buoyant tone unstrung,

A life of softer pulse and breath ;

A trance o'er all the senses flung,

And link'd in seeming bonds with death :

Yet, for that flush'd and rosy glow,

Forbidding us to deem it so !

While that strange autocrat, the dream,
The frolic cheat of slumber's ear,
Whose every sportive thought might seem
Fledg'd with the lightsome shafts that bear
The winged seed in Autumn's day—
Stirs the lull'd brain with gentlest sway.

Perchance recalls the sunny past,
The tale of boyhood breathes again ;
Perchance in memory's furnace cast,
She tracks the smarting steps of pain:
Yet 'tis an airy outline still,
The morrow's reason cannot fill.

Of every form and every hue

Where will the mazy visions end?

For ever forming links anew,

Like water-drops, they catch and blend ;

And from the field each other chase,

Their fine-wrought clues we cannot trace.

But he of dreams may spell the best

Who felt delicious music thrill

His spirit in the hour of rest,

And waking, found it music still !

I would philosophy could tell

What made the sleeper dream so well.*

* This is related, I think, of Mozart.

Ye mighty forests, deep and old,
 With knotty stems and towering shade,
That, where the lordly streams are rolled,
 A dense and matted gloom have made.

Your arms are rife with germs of life,
 Your heads receive the rushing wind :
With lingering sweeps the night-breeze creeps
 O'er your thick robes and wrinkled rind :

Ye stand like shrouds before the clouds,
 That hold the sunset of mid-June—
And darker still, when o'er the hill
 Creeps the pale dawning of the moon.

O then the soft suffusion clear

Peers over your enormous screen,

The skies are white with silver light,

How grand the shade ! how sweet the sheen !

And when the sun's first rosy line

Is drawn i' th' east—thro' every glade

Aglow with golden dews ye shine,

And orange-tints your depths pervade !

A FATHER TO HIS SLEEPING CHILD.

Say, can the ocean sands outnumber
The feelings fond and fatherly,
Which o'er thy softly pillow'd slumber
So oft have warm'd this heart for thee ?
Who in thy days of health so cheerful,
Of sickness who so fondly fearful ?

And now in ceaseless watch I stand
Lest pain's most pangless touch should slay ;
The snow-flake scarcely meets the hand
That steals its slight-knit life away ;
Tho' hope disclaims thy fragile mould,
I would not hear thy death-bell toll'd.

I love thy glossy curls which close

Upon thine eye-sight, golden-bright,

Or rest upon the damask rose

Of thy warm cheek, with lightsome freight ;

And those sweet eyes, so blue and deep,

Beneath the tranquil lids of sleep !

Thy lips, my child, recall the smile

Of those I would not show thee now,

And she who blest my life awhile

Has left her spirit on thy brow :

O doubly dear, now she is cold,

I would not hear thy death-bell toll'd !

Her voice was musical and low,
Of thrilling tone like sounds in sleep ;
And, like the foot-fall in the snow,
Heard faintly, tho' it sink so deep :
And thy soft accents are the same,
Thou hast her voice—her look—her name !

My life will wear a sunny guise
If thou wilt dwell on earth with me,
And every morrow's sun will rise
To greet my sight delightfully :
With thee, throughout the live-long day,
To sing my gloomy thoughts away.

But if 'tis fate that thou depart,

My heart will, must with sorrow bleed,

But God shall find that shatter'd heart

As lowly as the bending reed,

And I will live resign'd and high

In hope to meet ye in the sky !

DIXIT ET AVERTENS &c. VIRG. ÆN. II.

When Venus, late like wood-nymph drest
Departing breath'd diviner soul,
When downward flow'd her gather'd vest,
And godhead o'er the huntress stole,
How lovely must the change have been!
How beautiful the shifting mien!

I would I had been there to see
That burst of nobler charms and higher,
Losing in prouder symmetry
The simple lineaments of Tyre,
'Tho' but a moment she delay'd,
In glory of great beauty clad.

And stay, oh ! stay, the hero cried,
As far—far off—the vision shot,
Why is thy conference denied,
Or granted, when I know thee not ?
And thus, at last, to break the spell
But saddens more thy bright farewell !

THE ALTAR.

How fondly look'd I on the place,
Assign'd to rites of spousal love,
How saintly seem'd that board of grace,
With Jesus blessing bread above !

'Twas bosom'd in a kindlier air,
Than th' outer realms of care and dole ;
A sacred spirit brooded there,
Whose spell-like silence lull'd the soul !

For tho' full oft the accents dear,
Here utter'd, had been falsely fond,
Still they were breath'd and plighted here,
And broken in a place beyond !

TO A DYING FRIEND.

No—never—no—I feign would linger
Near friendship passing to the tomb,
To close thy lids with trembling finger,
And kiss the cheek that cannot bloom.

For, as by mercy's kind concession,
To soothe the mourner, who remains,
Full many a trace of life's expression
The earliest hour of death retains.

Affection's dictates still obeying,
I'll thus stay by thee, while a trace,
The faintest trace, and *that* decaying,
Yet lurks within so dear a face.

The council of the brave are met,
Soon will their swords with blood be wet,
The blood of tyranny and pride,
On—on—this is not regicide!

He thinks his sand is not outrun,
But he shall start to find it done;
He mocketh at our bold emprise,
Tho' Freedom looks him in the eyes.

What claim have they on further breath,
For momentary league with death,
Who dare to make the human heart
Throb with the fears themselves impart?

And he hath done this shameless deed,
Thus answered in a nation's need ;
He link'd our fetters to his crown
So tight, they burst, and flung him down.

When kings demand with haughtiest aims
Beyond their weight of kingly claims,
With worthy scorn and anger stirr'd,
We fill the balance with the sword !*

We seek a soil for hope to thrive—
But where is hope, if tyrants live ?
We burn to draw a bolder breath
By quenching his in forceful death !

* Every one must remember the sublime action of Camillus here alluded to.

Slaves, each and all, our necks have borne
His yoke with grief that swallow'd scorn,
Till, galling deeper, it began
To make all men, and each a man!

COMETS.

With mighty bulk along the sky
They sped—I saw their trains so bright !
Yet never taper's spark went by
With less delay upon the sight—
I mark'd they were too vast for thought,
Yet sudden distance made them nought.

ANACR. εἰς τέττιγα.

Μακαρίζομέν σε, τέττιξ, &c.

Cicala, we pronounce thee blest
For that, on topmost shrubs at rest,
When thou has quaff'd a little dew,
Thou singest as a king may do:
For thine is each and every thing
Thou viewest in the meads of spring,
Or what the other seasons bring.
Thou art the friend of those that till,
For working none the least of ill.
We men revere thee far and wide,
Sweet prophet of the summer-tide !
The Muses love thee. Phœbus loves

As his own gift, thy song, approves :
Thou art not worn away by age,
Earth-born, a songster, and a sage ;
A pangless and a bloodless frame,—
Thou art a god, or much the same.

ANACR. —————

Ἐρωσ ποτ' ἐν ῥόδοισι.

A bee, within a rose-bud lying,
'Scap'd the Infant Love's espying ;
With finger stung and sobbing cry
Quick to fair Venus did he fly,
“ Mother,” he said, “ I faint, I die !”
This wound, a little winged snake,
Which rustics call a bee, did make.
But she answered, “ If the sting
“ Of bees be such a painful thing,
“ What think'st thou of their bitter smart,
“ The hapless Victims of thy dart ?”

ANACR.—Αἱ Μοῦσαι τὸν Ἔρωτα, &c.

Cupid, bound in flowery bands,
The Muses placed in beauty's hands :
And still, in vain, does Venus sue
To win him back by ransom due ;
Little recks he of such demands,
Nor whence they come—but stays with beauty,
He hath learnt a bondsman's duty.

O, but this hollow skull
Hangs heavy on the noblest hopes we have !
Dost thou not think it doth ? That passion's host
Are all disbanded, and the war is done,—
This is the best of promise proffer'd here :
Thou tell'st me that all argument from hence
Is matter out of place ; that when I deem
We may not live again, pitching my doubt
On the most obvious spot for doubt to fall,
That I do idly thus, to step aside
From the high road of Truth to see a skull ;
That God hath given the Victory to hope,

A giant of great strength, whom heaven hath form'd
To battle with all poison? That mistrust
Would vanish, were I conscious of the strength
Of this Messiah—I will muse awhile—
The Creed, that makes thee happy, shall be mine.

TO _____

Think'st thou if spirits pure as thine
Through life might be for ever near,
I should not every fear resign,
As from my boyhood's home I steer?

But 'tis not so—my heart must bleed
With thorns amid a world of guile,
Snows to my rosy clime succeed,
And cunning's cant to Virtue's smile.

O, say, is not this mournful span
Between the cradle and the pall,
Is not this weary life of man
A scene of rude transitions all?

A mother heard our infant cries,
And folded us with fond embrace,
And when we woke, our infant eyes
Were open'd on a mother's face.

Our wishes she did make her own,
Her bosom fed and pillow'd too,
Answering each start or fitful moan
With trembling pulses fond and true.

Then knowledge was a thing untaught,
Heaven's charity, a daily dole,
Stole in inaudibly, and wrought
Its gentle bonds about the soul.

Eftsoons our ripen'd age is thrown

Abroad with things and many men,

Perchance to mock, perchance to groan,

To cower or trample, proud or mean.

Perchance to view each opening morn,

The beggar, Memory, lean and pale,

Still asking alms of Hope, forlorn,

Hoary and sad, and bow'd with bale.

Palms line the Llano's dreary waste,*

And sunset rims the saddest moor ;

But all our joy is gone and past,

Our hopes can face our fears no more.

* See Humboldt.

They ne'er return upon the track

 Their absence has consign'd to gloom,

Nor usher with sweet promise back

 Delicious peace, and health and bloom.

But oh! if spirits pure as thine

 Through life might be for ever near,

There would be scantier chance that mine

 Would sink beneath the doom I fear!

We all must die—but to the good
Celestial bliss succeeds the tomb,
The darkest vista in the wood
May open into scenes of bloom.

And where is scene so sweet, so fair,
As heaven beyond the grave expanding?
How many, Lord, shall anchor there,
And feel th' extatic bliss of landing?

O! might I be of that blest throng!
Design'd to laud and hymn and kneel
In rapture of adoring song,
And all a Seraph's lofty zeal!

Might I with nearer view inspect

The dread Unknown, the King of Kings,
And grasp with angel-intellect

Thy Nature, O thou Life of things !

THE END.

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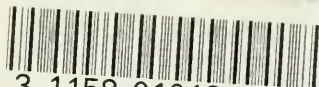
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